

Interactive tips handed down to remind Soldiers, Families about safety

BY EMILY BAKER
SENTINEL STAFF
FORT HOOD, TEXAS

Soldiers jumped as glass cracked and popped in front of them. Though nobody was trapped inside the two vehicles being torn apart by Fort Hood firefighters, Soldiers looked on in anticipation of doors being ripped off the cars. Soldiers cheered as firefighters used the Jaws of Life to pry the doors off the vehicles, demonstrating how they would rescue someone trapped inside. As entertaining as it was to watch the firefighters destroy the vehicles, part of the day's events were designed to help Soldiers avoid the need for the Jaws of Life. Motor Vehicle Safety Day, which also incorporated seasonal safety, was held May 11 at the Clear Creek Post Exchange. The day was held in response to an Installation Management Command request to teach Soldiers how to be safe in the summer, said William "Gibby" Gibson, a training specialist in the III Corps Safety Office. But part of the day's events were geared toward Families and children. Firefighters took the children who were too young, or otherwise not in school, through a child-sized house to teach them what to do in a fire and how to call for help. The tiny house is equipped with a machine that makes smoke out of maple syrup to show the children how quickly visibility goes away during a fire.

Some children enjoyed seeing preserved spiders, a centipede, fleas and a bat, which taught them what to avoid while they are playing outside. 10-year-old Cristian Montes already learned about spiders in school, but the centipede was new to him. His dad, Raul, took him to the event to help him understand what he does for a living. Raul Montes is a Belton police officer. "I wanted my son to check it out and for him to get familiar with what I do," he said. A popular part of the event for other Families was getting car seats checked. Sergio Perez, a Family Advocacy Program senior instructor for child passenger safety, and others helped parents check to see if their car seats were properly installed and whether their seats were the right size for their children. Four out of five car seats are not installed properly, Perez said.

If a seat was too small for the child, too old or had been recalled, FAP took it and provided a new



Lorenzo Stevens-Patino, 4, tries on gear used by the Fort Hood firefighters during Motor Vehicle Safety Day at the Clear Creek Post Exchange May 11.



Spc. Tommy Allen of the 13th Finance Group maneuvers around an obstacle course on a tricycle while wearing goggles that simulate being drunk during Motor Vehicle Safety Day at the Clear Creek Post Exchange May 11.

one. FAP also provided swimming pool noodles to help recline infant seats at a proper angle.

Many Soldiers enjoyed a section of the event designed to prove drinking inhibits coordination. They donned a pair of goggles that simulate what a drunk person sees and attempted to maneuver an obstacle course on a tricycle or shoot a target. "It seemed like everything was wobbly," said Spc. Tommy Allen, a travel pay technician with the 13th Finance Group. "Something would be far out and be close and then be far out again."

Most of Allen's group attended the event as part of a safety stand-down day, said Capt. Melissa Ramsey, commander of Detachment C, 15th Finance Battalion. "We preach safety all the time," Ramsey said. "You can take it for granted if you hear the same things over and over again. To have the subject-matter experts here brings some kind of reality to it."

Other subject-matter experts at the event included the Air Force's 3rd Weather Squadron, who provided information about severe weather; Fort Sam Houston's Rough Riders, who taught motorcycle safety; boat safety and street rod experts; and a spinning machine that proved seatbelts keep passengers safely in a vehicle during a roll over. Also on display during the event was Spc. Jacqueline Gonzalez' poster about composite risk management, which won the safety poster contest.